November 24, 1963

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TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN BILL MOYERS AND DEAN ROSTOW, YALE LAW SCHOOL

WM: It is good to talk to you, Dean Rostow.

DR: Thank you, boy, and if I can help in any way, I am calling with a suggestion. I've just talked to Nick Kazenbach and the poor fellow, he has so much of a burden on him. I've talked to him about three times today and he just sounded so groggy so I thought I'd pass this thought along to you. And, of course, I realize how tough it must be now for the President. In this situation, with the suspect killed, my suggestion is that a Presidential Commission be appointed of very distinguished citizens in the very near future. Bi-partisan and above politics -- no Supreme Court justices but people like Tom Dewey and Bill Story from Texas and so on. A commission of seven or nine people, maybe Nixon, I don't know, to look into the whole affair of the murder of the President because world opinion and American opinion is just now so shaken by the behavior of the Dallas Police that they're not believing anything.

WM: I can understand that....

DR: Now, I've got a party here, I've been pursuing the policy, you know, that people need to come together at this time.

WM: You know what you could do that would be very helpful and this is a good suggestion and I'll pass it on -- just a minute -- the President is calling.....excuse me, go ahead....

DR: Well, what can I do that will help.

WM: Well, I was just speaking coming in after hearing the news of Oswald's shooting that this is symptomatic of what has been happening in this country in the last few years that there is a breakdown of respect for law and order --you know -- these signs of "impeach the Supreme Court" etc. etc. etc. If I could have a memorandum to give to the President along these lines ..one of his great tasks is to help continue the institutions that seem to be at least, if not in doubt, right now, at least weakened by some kind of sickness that has taken hold of some parts of our population. Now, I'd like him to have to consider in some private talks he's having with newsmen and with perhaps, with his Joint Session next Wednesday night. He needs to make some points, you know, that America is known as a land of public order, a land

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of civility, a land of ....in which the public safety is guaranteed and... there's a very serious question, right now, in the mind of the world about these institutions that undergird us so tremendously and...

DR: Well, his Gettysburg speech last Spring was just terrific...couldn't have been better... I'll be more than glad to send any message he thinks will be helpful right away...

WM: All right. Now, your suggestion is that he appoint a Special Commission of distinguished Americans, primarily in the field of law, I presume, to look into the whole question of the assassination.

DR: That's right and a report on it.

WM: All right, I'll get to him. Also, I wish you would keep me informed about how Nick is doing --- we don't want to put any greater strain on him than is necessary but ...

DR: Well, he's a great and able man, utmost personable, he's, he's fighting back, he's terrific...

WM: Yes, yes. Thanks for calling. I'll follow through.

DR: You're welcome. Goodbye.

WM: Goodbye

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